

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

Payment Decision: Proposed 2013 Fee Schedule Would Boost Medicare Payment by Seven Percent

New payments for hospital transitions could further bolster your bottom line.

CMS published its proposed Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for 2013 in the July 30 Federal Register, offering a glimpse into how the agency would calculate Medicare pay rates for the coming year. The news is good for family physicians and similar specialties, with welcome pay increases proposed across the board.

Family Physicians Could See 7 Percent Increase

The schedule anticipates a seven percent payment increase for family physicians, as well as a five percent payment increase for pediatricians and internal medicine physicians.

Rationale: "Helping primary care doctors will help improve patient care and lower health care costs long term," CMS Acting Administrator **Marilyn B. Tavenner** said in a July 6 statement.

As many family medicine groups know, Congress voted earlier this year to postpone a 27 percent Medicare payment cut that was supposed to occur in 2012. Unfortunately, the 2013 Fee Schedule projects that cuts for most specialties will be just as steep on January 1, 2013, unless Congress and the President again intervene. Practices will have to play a waiting game and hope that legislators once again halt the decreases resulting from current law.

Hospital Transition Pay Could Be in Your Future

If your physician spends a significant amount of time providing care following a hospital discharge, you might see extra pay for that service in 2013, if the proposal is finalized.

"The proposal calls for CMS to make a separate payment to a patient's community physician or practitioner to coordinate the patient's care in the 30 days following a hospital stay," CMS says.

"The proposed rule also asks for public comment on how Medicare can better recognize the range of services community physicians and practitioners provide as part of treating patients, either through face-to-face services in the office or coordinating care outside the office when the patient does not see the physician," the CMS statement continues.

Timeline: CMS accepted public comment on the proposed rule through September 4 and now will begin work on the final rule, which is due on or about November 1. For more information on the proposed rule, visit the CMS web site at <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/PhysicianFeeSched/PFS-Federal-Regulation-Notices-Items/CMS-1590-P.html>